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AIR BASE DEFENSE FOR THE AIR EXPEDITIONARY FORCE: MORE THAN DEFENDING THE REDLINE.

BY

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The conclusions and opinions expressed in this document are those of the author. They do not reflect the official position of the US Government, Department of Defense, the United States Air Force, or Air University.

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Preface

Major Clifton L. Dickey was commissioned through the United States Army Reserve Officer Training Corps, Washington State University in 1983. Upon graduation, he attended the Armor Officers Basic Course (Cavalry) at Fort Knox, Kentucky. Following the Basic Course he was assigned to Fort Rucker, Alabama, for Initial Entry Rotary Wing Flight Training. In 1985 he joined the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) at Fort Campbell, Kentucky. While assigned to the 101st he served in positions as section and platoon commander, Infantry Brigade air liaison officer, and company commander. In 1989, while still assigned to the 101st he served as the battalion executive officer for Task Force Southern Eagle IV in Honduras supporting Joint Task Force Bravo. Upon returning from Honduras he was reassigned to Fort Rucker, Alabama, for the Aviation Officers Advanced Course. In 1990 he was assigned to the 194th Maintenance Battalion in South Korea and served first as a Maintenance Production Control Officer and then as Commander of Bravo Company 3-101st Aviation Regiment. In 1992, he was assigned to the 82d Airborne Division at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. While in the 82nd he served in positions as battalion assistant S-3 (Operations), battalion S-4 (Logistics Officer), the Aviation Brigade S-4, and battalion executive officer. Next Major Dickey attended the Air Command and Staff College, graduating in 1997. He currently attends the Air Force's School of Advanced Airpower Studies (SAAS). He holds a Bachelor's degree in Business Management and a Master's degree in Public Administration. In July 1998,

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Abstract

The Air Expeditionary Force (AEF) is the wave of the future for the United States Air Force's power projection mission.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Airpower is most vulnerable on the ground. Thus, air base defense is an integral part of airpower deployments. Bases not only must withstand aerial and ground attacks, but also must sustain concentrated and prolonged activities against the enemy. This must be a particular focus of operations during peace support or crisis situations when force operate from austere and unimproved locations, in small units, or in crowded urban settings and face threats to security from individuals and groups as well as possible military or paramilitary.

AFDD 1, Air Force Basic Doctrine

Air Base Ground Defense has always been an important mission for air forces. Throughout the history of military aviation, airfields and bases have come under the threat of enemy action in one form or another. Between the years of 1940 and 1992, over 645 ground attacks fell on airbases worldwide damaging or destroying over 2,000 aircraft.[1] An enemy does not need to rely on a conventional air force or even sophisticated weapons systems to place an air base at risk. Future adversaries of the United States will likely employ some type of asymmetric strategy to defeat or lessen the

[1] Alan Vick, *Snakes in the Eagle's Nest: A History of Ground Attacks on Air Bases* (Santa Monica, CA.: Rand Corporation, 1995), xiv.

effectiveness of the United States Air Force's Air Expeditionary Force (AEF). As the nature of ground threats to air bases are likely to vary from situation to situation it may be difficult to predict which contingencies will most stress air base ground defenses. The experiences of Korea, Vietnam, and Khobar Towers provide evidence that waiting until the air base or associated facilities are under attack to decide on a defense is to late.

The incident in Saudi Arabia renewed the debate over force protection and the role of air base ground defense forces in our military strategy. The USAF Independent Review of the General Downing Khobar Towers Bombing Report provides a concise statement of the current situation facing the U.S. and the USAF:

In the aftermath of the Khobar Towers bombing, it is extremely prudent to review exactly how, and to what degree, the Air Force needs to improve the way it prepares forces for joint and combined operations in a rapidly and ever changing world. As a result of the coalition successes in DESERT SHIELD/DESERT STORM, coupled with American dominance in the skies, terrorists have focused on vulnerabilities on the ground. As a result, the Air Force can no longer consider overseas locations as risk-free sanctuaries from which to operate. In an effort to overcome these vulnerabilities, the Air Force must institutionalize a completely different Force Protection mindset. The Air Force must inculcate this new mind-set into every service member through all levels of education and training, from accession to separation. Further, an enduring organizational structure must be established that will ensure Force Protection remains on course through frequent reviews which address threat dynamics.[2]

[2] United States Air Force, Air Force Review of Gen. (Ret.) Downing Report - Khobar Towers Bombing, 31 October 1996, 3.

The increased importance of force protection due to the current terrorist threat in overseas areas and the reduced size of deployed forces makes force protection everyone's responsibility. For example, force protection at the source of sortie generation is essential to mission accomplishment, because if the sortie never leaves the ground, then the mission cannot be accomplished.[3] Joint Pub 3-0, *Doctrine for Joint Operations*, states "the protection of friendly forces will often be a friendly center of gravity during early entry operations. Therefore, early entry forces should deploy with sufficient organic and supporting capabilities to preserve their freedom of action and protect personnel and equipment from potential or likely threats."[4] The threat is such that the USAF can no longer afford to support contingency operations with a piecemeal security force.[5]

Normally the United States Army is responsible for the defense of all land areas outside the perimeters of bases and installations by Joint Doctrine and joint USAF/USA security agreement. However, the defensive problem facing the Air Expeditionary Force (AEF) is the lack of a dedicated ground force to protect the force from threats originating outside the perimeter wire. We will not be able to use the AEF to provide a rapidly deployable, mobile, and highly capable flexible deterrence option[6] if the air base to which it must deploy is highly vulnerable.

This study explores the issue of how the United States Air Force should provide air base ground defense for AEF bases. Specifically, it examines the United States Air Force's attempt to expand the role of its security forces, through the use of the 820th

[3] Ibid. 7.
[4] Joint Publication 3-0, *Doctrine for Joint Operations*, 1 February 1995, IV-5.
[5] White Paper *USAF Force Protection and Security Force Requirements: A Vision for the 21st Century* June 1997, 15.
[6] William S. Cohen, Secretary of Defense, Annual *Report to the President and Congress 1998* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1998), 211.

Security Forces Group, to provide a responsive and credible ground defense of an air base both inside and outside the perimeter. For comparison, the study looks at the US Army capability to meet the deployment timeline required for air base ground defense operations.

This thesis contains six chapters. Chapter 2 provides the historical background of air base ground defense and the enemy threat to the air base environment. Chapter 3 discusses doctrine and the relevant issues concerning air base ground defense (ABGD) in support of an AEF. Chapter 4 explores a case study of Operation SAFE SIDE and the USAF ABGD experience in Vietnam. Chapter 5 reviews USAF ABGD initiatives and compares them to Host Nation Support and the US Army support option. Chapter 6 presents recommendations to improve the conduct of air base ground defense in support of air expeditionary forces.

This paper does not address the airbase "air" defense issue or the relative merits of the air expeditionary force concept. The AEF discussion is limited to a level of detail, which identifies the problems for airbase ground defense, and the relative vulnerabilities to ground based attack. This thesis is also not a how to handbook on the tactics of air base ground defense and is limited to the United States Air Force problem only. The purpose of this paper is to identify and offer suggestions for the defense of our deployed forces and to reduce the risk of conducting operations. An underlying assumption of this thesis is that the USAF will continue to develop the AEF concept and rely on the force projection capability it provides to the geographic CINCs and joint force commanders.

The basic recommendation of this paper is for the United States Air Force to continue the development of the 820th Security Forces Group (SFG) concept and the

integration of the Air Expeditionary Force (AEF) into the development of joint doctrine. The current capability of the USAF Security Forces to meet the ever changing threat and the rapid deployment timeline required of the AEF make the 820th SFG a vital mission need. Ultimately, the USAF must decide if it is better to develop an organic defense force or attempt to integrate current USAF and US Army forces to counter the threat to its operating bases.

Chapter 2

Background and Threat

The security of air bases is a pre-requisite of successful air operations… it is the opening stages of a future war when we may expect to be on the defensive and when, if the lessons of the recent war are applied, the enemy will make the neutralization of our air power his primary objective, that the security of air bases will be most vital and most in danger. We cannot count next time on beginning the war with nine months inactivity. We must be organized and ready on D-Day to meet all forms of attack, including sabotage, airborne assault, infiltration by mobile ground forces or low flying air attack.

Air Marshall Sir Arthur S. Barrett

British Post-War Commission Report 1945

Background

The United States Air Force and its predecessor organizations have enjoyed a considerable degree of safety from ground assault since the earliest days of military aviation. During World War I, U.S. air forces operated from bases located to the rear of largely unmoving trench lines and enjoyed nearly absolute security from ground attack.[7] Airfields in the forward areas were no more than open grass fields with areas to park and

[7] Roger P. Fox, *Air Base Defense in the Republic of Vietnam 1961-1973* (Washington, D.C.: Office of Air Force History, United States Air Force, 1979), 1.

maintain aircraft. They generally provided little in the way of targets for the enemy to attack. In addition, with the general absence of fixed facilities air units could move before any type of enemy ground threat could approach and endanger the aircraft. The lack of a serious ground threat enabled the military to orient air base ground defense forces toward interior or perimeter guard functions and little else. In the period following World War I, the policy for protection of airfields relied on the base defense experience learned in the "Great War."[8]

During World War II, the German seizure of Maleme airfield by airborne and air landed infantry troops gave the Germans a foothold from which to expand their attack on the island of Crete. Their eventual occupation of Crete in 1941 demonstrated the importance of having trained and dedicated personnel for the protection of airfields. A small German force[9] defeated a much larger force of British troops, the vast majority of which were support personnel, untrained in combat skills or base defense. This defeat led British Prime Minister Winston Churchill to declare he "would no longer tolerate a half-million Air Force personnel without a combat role. All airmen were to be armed and trained, ready to fight and die in defense of their airfields; …every airfield should be the stronghold of fighting air-groundmen, and not the abode of uniformed civilians in the prime of life protected by a detachment of soldiers."[10] To address the Prime Minister's

[8] LTC Lawrence R. Lane and LTC Albert F. Riggle, *Airfield Defense For Global Engagement/Global Power* (Carlisle Barracks, Pa.: U.S. Army War College, 1993), 3.

[9] The Germans perfected airfield attacks using their blitzkrieg tactics. The bomber forces would attack the base periphery from medium altitude to drive enemy antiaircraft (AA) gunners to cover. Dive-bombing and strafing kept the gunners and other defenders in their shelters. Paratroopers then dropped on the air base, and defenders "coming up for air" found themselves looking into the muzzles of German guns. Finally, transports bearing airborne infantry began landing on runways carefully spared by the bombers. J. F. C. Fuller, *The Second World War, 1939-1945, A Strategical and Tactical History* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1954), 67.

[10] Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War, Vol. III: The Grand Alliance* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1950), 777.

concerns, the Royal Air Force Regiment was formed with the primary responsibility of protecting airfields. The RAF Regiment received specialized training and equipment to operate outside the perimeter the air bases. This capability allowed them to seek out and intercept enemy forces before they could interfere with air base operations. In 1942, the Army Chief of Staff, General George C. Marshall, approved the formation of air base security battalions with an initial manning authorization of 53,000 soldiers. The plan called for a maximum of 296 air base security battalions, modeled after the RAF Regiment. Following the Japanese surrender in 1945, the Army Air Forces (AAF) did away with the dedicated ground defense force as part of the post-war drawdown.[11]

The United States military entered the Korean War in June 1950 totally unprepared for combat. Concerns about air base defense led the Air Force to begin a buildup of ground forces for self-defense, a mission which fell to provisional base defense task forces organized and equipped like infantry. The Air Police became the nucleus of this force, expanding from 10,000 personnel in July 1950 to 32,000 in December 1951.[12] At each air base, the base commander or his provost marshal exercised command. At Headquarters Air Force, the Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations had the primary responsibility to organize and equip personnel for base defense. Although at times over 30,000 North Korean guerillas were operating in United Nations territory, they ignored air bases as important targets. The effect of this neglect proved costly to the North Koreans as the UN air forces achieved and exploited air superiority.[13]

With the end of the Korean War in July 1953, Far East Air Forces (FEAF) assessed and documented its experience in a summary report. Among other things the FEAF

[11] Fox, 4.
[12] Ibid., 5.

found that "effective security against sabotage and a workable ground defense system was never fully developed on most Air Force installations in Korea 'because the plans' were not correlated with the threat…or were beyond the unit's capability to execute effectively."[14] The post-Korean War drawdown again left the United States Air Force without a viable air base defense force. The focus of the Security Police had changed to the defense of Strategic Air Command (SAC) bases in the continental U.S.

Less than ten years after the Korean War the United States found itself engaged in combat in Vietnam. The war in Vietnam was different from the earlier war experiences because there was no established front. The rear areas were just as vulnerable to enemy attack as were the troops in the main combat zones of Vietnam.[15] On the night of 29 January 1968, the US realized the seriousness of its air base vulnerability with the beginning of the TET offensive. On the first night, enemy forces mounted forty-four attacks against friendly airbases with forty-one classified as standoff attacks. The standoff attacks relied on crude rockets, 81mm mortars, and recoilless rifles while managing to destroy 13 aircraft and leaving 40 others with major damage.[16] When the TET offensive finally ended on 31 March 1968, the NVA/VC had attacked 23 US and RVN airfields, 36 provincial capitals, and numerous hamlets but lost the offensive at a cost of over 45,000 casualties.[17]

In military operations since Vietnam, US air forces have again been relatively free from enemy ground threats. During operations in Grenada, Panama, and Desert

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[13] Lane, 5.
[14] Fox, 6.
[15] Carl Berger, *The United States Air Force in Southeast Asia, 1961-1973: An Illustrated Account* (Washington, D.C., United States Air Force, Office of Air Force History, 1984), 257.
[16] Colonel John E. Van Duyn, "Analysis of Combat After Action Report 7th AF, 29 Jan.-30 Apr. 1968", (Project Corona Harvest No. 0003161), K132.103-13, Jan.-Apr. 1968, in USAF Collection, AFHRA.
[17] Berger, 56.

Shield/Desert Storm the enemy failed to pose a threat of ground assault against our air bases or facilities. However, the incident in Dhahran, Saudi Arabia at the Khobar Towers complex provides a clear indication of the change in potential threats to US forces and facilities. The Khobar Towers terrorist bombing on 25 June 1996 was a tragic and costly event. Terrorists detonated a bomb with an estimated likely yield of more than 20,000 pounds of TNT-equivalent explosives just outside the fence of the American occupied sector of Khobar Towers. The explosion killed 19 service members and injured hundreds more. This was the second terrorist bombing in Saudi Arabia in less than a year, the first being an attack upon the Office of Program Manager Saudi Arabian National Guard (OPN SANG).[18] It is this new threat potential which must receive the greatest attention in the future plans for the employment forward-deployed forces.

Threats

The ground threats to air forces from the earliest history to the present fall into three categories that directly relate to the enemy's objective. The categories are airfield capture to deny use of the airfield, harass air base defenders, and destruction of aircraft and equipment. Except for capturing an airfield, the force necessary to conduct these threatening ground assaults in most cases is relatively small.

The first category of threat, airfield capture, was common during World War II and the Korean War. During these wars, airfields were lost when large enemy formations overwhelmed the US and Allied ground forces. The British experience on Crete demonstrated that once an enemy force builds enough combat power to defeat the ground army they can easily overwhelm a lightly armed base defense force. The Germans took

[18] USAF, *Air Force Review of Gen. (Ret.) Downing Report - Khobar Towers Bombing*, 31 October 1996, 2.

Maleme airfield through the combined use of highly trained airborne paratroopers and follow on air landed infantry. Once the Germans had a secure airfield, they were able to reinforce their position and expand their assault upon the island forcing the British to withdraw.[19] In the Korean War, the North Korean ground forces drove the United Nations Forces southward down the peninsula and airfields were subsequently abandoned. Under the above circumstances, there was little if anything a base defense force could do to retain the airfields in the face of such a large threat. Presently the likelihood of a large ground force attacking an air base is relatively small. Early detection of large ground forces by modern surveillance systems will allow our forces to disrupt their actions before they can interfere with air base operations.

The second category, harass air base defenders, was most common in the Vietnam War although attacks of this sort occurred in World War II and Korea. Viet Cong and North Vietnamese forces conducted limited attacks against US and Republic of Vietnam (RVN) airfields to disrupt air operations, kill Americans, and demonstrate the allied force vulnerability.[20] Most of these attacks took the form of hit and run mortar and rocket fire from standoff distances. The VC/NVA forces would fire a short volley of five to six rounds then disappear back into the jungle or local village without being detected by the defending security force. Da Nang Air Base was a perfect example to demonstrate the vulnerability of air bases to harassing fires. The air base was surrounded by water on three sides and Da Nang city on the fourth. Harassing attacks commonly would come from fields situated along the water and located 8 to 12 kilometers from the base. The

[19] Churchill, 285.
[20] David A. Shlapak and Alan Vick, *"Check Six begins on the ground" Responding to the Evolving Ground Threat to U.S. Air Force Bases* (Santa Monica, CA.: Rand Corporation, 1995), 28.

attackers escaped detection by using small fishing boats to infiltrate the area.[21] Bin Thuy Air Base, South Vietnam, also came under attacks similar to the ones at Da Nang. At Bin Thuy the local Viet Cong commander promised to attack the base once a month and did so with 75mm recoilless rifles no less than five times. The area surrounding Bin Thuy was eventually pacified through the use of aggressive patrolling combined with close air support.[22]

Peacetime operations can potentially be the subject of harassing attacks. The US experiences in humanitarian operations indicate that a threat does exist to our personnel and resources. The United Nations Operation Somalia (UNOSOM) is a case where a lack of local governmental control can place US and Allied personnel at risk. The local warring factions known as "technicals," were heavily armed paramilitary forces who controlled the streets of Mogadishu. Prior to the US Marine task force arrival, humanitarian aid was intercepted at the ports, airfields, and relief sites by the "technicals" and never made it to the areas in need. Only through the aggressive posture of the US Marines was control of the city taken away from the "technicals" and the ports and airfields opened for normal operations. Once the mission reverted to the United Nations International Task Force (UNITAF), the factions began disrupting humanitarian operations again. The UNITAF eventually regained control of the city but not before the factions raided several weapons sites, food storage facilities, and relief sites.[23]

The best method to counter harassing type attacks continues to be positive control of the area surrounding critical airfields and facilities. Future defensive forces must have the

[21] Southeast Asia Trip Report October 1967, Project CORONA HARVEST, K132.103-2, 11 Dec. 1969, in USAF Collection, AFHRA, 28.
[22] Southeast Asia Trip Report October 1967, K132.103-2, 29.

capability to provide a credible degree of control out to the effective range of the harassing weapon system.

The final category of threat is destruction of aircraft and equipment. This is the most common type of attack used by enemy forces against air bases and facilities. During World War II, forces on both sides used ground attacks against fuel and ammunition storage, maintenance and parking areas, and aircraft. The British SAS, operating in small teams, was very successful at destroying German aircraft and supporting resources. The Germans tried with little success to counter the hit and run tactics of the SAS teams throughout the war.[24] This type of attack was also the most common during the Vietnam War. Between the years 1961 and 1973, the VC/NVA forces launched 475 air base attacks, which destroyed 75 aircraft and damaged an additional 898.[25] The vast majority of these attacks were from standoff weapons such as mortars, rockets, and recoilless rifles and not from air base perimeter penetrations.[26] The most recent attack, which fits this category, is the Khobar Towers Bombing in Saudi Arabia. The terrorist attack killed 19 US airmen and destroyed a good portion of the barracks facility. While not aimed at the destruction of aircraft the attack had the desired effect in that it caused the US forces relocated to a safer air base.

An adversary can have a dramatic effect on the popular support of forward-deployed forces and on the morale of those US forces with a relatively small effort. The best defense we have against this type of attack is to locate out of the range of potential weapon systems or neutralize them before they can affect operations.

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[23] Robert B. Oakley and David Tucker Two Perspectives on Interventions and Humanitarian Operations (Carlisle Barracks, Pa.: Security Studies Institute, 1997), 2-4.
[24] Shlapak, 30.
[25] Fox, 172.

Summary

Throughout the history of military aviation, a ground threat to the air bases existed. The threats generally fit one of three categories consisting of attacks to capture the airfield, harass the base defenders, or cause destruction of aircraft and equipment. While the threat of airfield capture has decreased since the end of the Korean War, the other categories of attack have increased substantially. During the Vietnam War, the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army had great success with standoff attacks for the purpose of harassment and destruction of aircraft and equipment.

The priority for air base ground defense within the US military has always been relatively low. Only during the periods of intense combat did the priority change and allowed for the expansion of the security forces to counter enemy threats. The use of ground attacks continues today and presents a challenge for the air base ground defender to solve, as an effective counter to the standoff attack is necessary to prevent unnecessary loss of life and equipment. The peacetime air base ground defender must prepare their forces to counter enemy activity while not being a priority for resources, personnel, or equipment modernization. The next chapter looks at the available ABGD doctrine and the peculiar defense challenges of the AEF.

[26] Van Duyn, 4.

Chapter 3

ABGD DOCTRINE

Doctrine should be alive—-growing, evolving, and maturing. New experiences, reinterpretations of former experiences, advances in technology, changes in threats, and cultural changes can all require alterations to parts of our doctrine even as other parts remain constant. If we allow our thinking about aerospace power to stagnate, our doctrine can become dogma.

AFM 1-1

Basic Aerospace Doctrine of the USAF

Historically, The Army and Air Force have paid little attention to the problems associated with air base ground defense. The Army does not have a doctrinal manual dedicated to ABGD and the Air Force doctrine encompasses only the tactical level. Instead of providing a comprehensive solution to the major ground threats to an air base, each service has generally only performed those missions specifically addressed in joint doctrine. The lack of specific guidance in the joint doctrine for ABGD has left air bases and associated facilities vulnerable to enemy attack.

The Joint Doctrine Encyclopedia defines base defense as “the local military measures, both normal and emergency, required to nullify or reduce the effectiveness of enemy attacks on, or sabotage of, a base, to ensure that the maximum capacity of its

facilities is available to US forces."[27] This definition fails to identify what military measures or which service they should come from. It also fails to define geographical limits of the local area controlled by the base defender. The current joint doctrine makes the combatant CINC responsible for the coordination and assignment of the base defense mission within his theater of operations.

Joint Pub 0-2, *Unified Action Armed Forces (UNAAF),* is also unclear when assigning the functions for the military services. It states each service is responsible "to develop, garrison, supply, equip, and maintain bases and other installations, including lines of communication, and to provide administrative and logistics support for all forces and bases, unless otherwise directed by the Secretary of Defense."[28] The mission to provide defensive security by the services is implied in the term "maintain bases and other installations" and is not a specific assignment. Subsequently there is little in the way of guidance directing the provision of defensive capabilities outside a services specific mission.

A major problem with joint doctrine for base defense is that it is written for military operations in a developed theater of operations following a cold war model. The essential components of the defensive structure depend upon the presence of a competent land component, either US or Host Nation, and a linear battlefield structure. The clearly defined forward and rear areas of a linear battlefield make coordination of defensive forces much easier for the geographic CINC or Joint Force Commander (JFC). Normally all support operations such as logistics bases, marshalling areas, and air bases are located away from the forward areas or front to provide for greater security. It is the rear area

[27] Joint Doctrine Encyclopedia, 63.
[28] Joint Publication 0-2, Unified Action Armed Forces (UNAAF), II-13.

concept that defines the responsibility for defensive security missions and operations. Accordingly, the JFC "will designate a specific land area within his operational area as the Joint Rear Area (JRA) to facilitate protection and operation of installations and forces supporting the joint force."[29]

The JRA is divided into areas of operations (AOs) to facilitate mutual support between bases located within the designated AO. By forming clusters of bases, the security level increases and leads to a reduction in the number of forces required to provide base and area defense against Level I, II, and III threats. A major assumption of the JRA concept is that the base can provide its own security to defeat a Level I threat. Level I threats are classified as agents, saboteurs, sympathizers, and terrorists. A base defense force also must be able to delay Level II threats such as small tactical units, unconventional warfare forces, and guerillas until area rapid response forces can respond. The Level III threats are large tactical force operations, which include airborne, air assault, and amphibious operations and are beyond the base defense force capability. Level III threats require the use of a tactical combat force (TCF) which is normally a combat unit from the land component within the theater.[30]

The main problem of coordinating defensive efforts occurs between the Air Force base defense force and the Army's area defense force. The Air Force security forces have traditionally oriented towards a point defense of the air base and its perimeter. Normal Air Force security force operations do not extend beyond the perimeter of the air base or installation as security personnel are not trained or equipped for the mission. The Army prefers to conduct defense on an area basis and not dedicate forces to a fixed or

[29] Joint Pub 3-10.1, *JTTP for Base Defense*, I-1.
[30] Joint Pub 3-10.1, I-6.

point defense role. With the mission to conduct sustained offensive land operations, provide rapid response forces, and tactical combat forces, the Army simply does not have the personnel and equipment available to conduct dedicated point defense operations.

The USAF has two clear choices for future operations, accept doctrine as is or adapt the Air Force tactical doctrine to meet the needs of the AEF. The Air Force ABGD doctrine based on the cold war threat provides an unacceptable level of security for AEF operations for several reasons. First, the AEF although light, rapidly deployable, and highly capable still must occupy permanent air bases once in the theater of operations. The physical properties of an air base do not change just because it is supporting an AEF. The air base support structure will still consist of aircraft parking areas, maintenance and operations areas, fuel and ammunition stocks, runways, and personnel support areas. The quality of these facilities is questionable in areas other than established NATO or Middle Eastern allied countries. Most nations lack the high-quality facilities necessary to support modern US aircraft. Specifically, aircraft shelters and secure billeting for crews will be limited or nonexistent, and ramp space will tend to be crowded. Foreign military facilities are likely to lack prepared fighting positions and a well-defined defense plan. Furthermore, US security forces may have little or no experience working with host nation military forces. Operations may also take place from insecure civilian airports where jet fuel is typically stored above ground, and access control is often quite poor. Air Force high-value aircraft such as airlifters, tankers, and AWACS will often operate from these hard-to-protect sites.[31]

Second, one of the goals of the AEF is to employ Agile Combat Support, which should make it possible to reduce the number of support functions and personnel

deployed. The increased responsiveness and support rendered from the reach-back concept will allow the AEF to operate effectively with a reduced "footprint."[32] The reduced "footprint" in personnel and equipment lessens the vulnerability of the force in the sense that fewer potential targets are present at the air base.[33] However, reducing the package size does not automatically reduce the support requirement equally. Since the physical dimensions of the air base do not change based on the size of the force occupying it, the force protection mission may actually be more difficult because a smaller number of personnel must protect the same area.

Third, the security force must be able to provide an adequate defensive posture in order to allow the AEF to operate effectively. Security of facilities, the air base, and the area outside the air base is vital to the mission. Host nation capabilities may not be sufficient to provide the defense of the local area outside the air base. The Khobar Towers bombing is an example of an Air Force facility attacked by a hostile force while a supposedly capable host nation force provided external security. A bomb as powerful as the Khobar Towers truck bomb could easily cause extensive damage to a flight line, ammunition or fuel dump, or an air operations center.

Finally, the AEF base commander will face the challenge of providing the force protection necessary to defend his force. Existing doctrine, because it is based upon a developed and mature theater, does not provide the AEF base commander clear guidance for performing this vital mission. The base security force can currently provide adequate defense within the perimeter of the air base but is not capable of effectively countering threats outside the perimeter. The issue for the AEF base commander is how to counter

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[31] Shlapak, 15.
[32] AFDD 1, *Air Force Basic Doctrine*, 35.

the threat outside the wire when US ground forces or a capable host nation force is not present. The Khobar Towers incident and the experience in Somalia emphasize the point that our personnel and resources are not secure from threats. Brigadier General Coleman, Commander of the Air Force Security Forces, stated

"Combat wings with AEF taskings will require additional resources for force protection. Those wings expected to operate autonomously, must possess the capability to enforce the legal perimeter, dominate the tactical perimeter and exert influence in the area of interest. This may require more than the present levels of manpower, equipment and intelligence available today. The Air Force must provision these units to operate at a level commensurate with the needs of the air power mission."[34]

The Air Force recognized that the cold based air base defense doctrine was insufficient and published Air Force Policy Directive 31-3, *Air Base Defense*, dated 23 March 1993 to change the way it would conduct air base defense. The policy recognized the fact that there are circumstances where Air Force security units will have to operate beyond the limits of the air base perimeter. The policy establishes an Air Force responsibility to provide "force protection from attackers attempting close attack by penetrating forces and from stand-off attack inside an agreed air base tactical area of responsibility (TAOR)."[35] This policy also established guidance for changes in force structure, training, and equipping of the security forces within the Air Force.

Air Force Handbook 31-305, Security Police Deployment Planning, dated 31 October 1994 outlines the specific Unit Type Codes (UTCs) required for security forces to actively defend against Level II threats outside the air base perimeter. The UTC

[33] Global Engagement, 16.
[34] White Paper, 13.

concept allows the security force commander to tailor the defense force to defeat Level I and II threats in the TAOR. The basic flight consists of 43 airmen and can be augmented with additional specialized squads of 8 to 13 personnel. The specialized squads are equipped with 81mm mortars, .50 caliber machineguns, MK-19 grenade launchers, fire direction control radar, or military working dogs. The handbook provides planning guidance on combining the UTCs to form base defense units ranging from 293 personnel, for a low threat area, to 1399 personnel for an area with a high Level II threat.[36] These operational changes afford the base commander the ability to counter the most likely threats to the air base environment. However, a major drawback of the UTC concept is that the specialized augmentation squads may not come from the same base or wing as the basic flight. Potential command, control, and administrative problems exist in the ad hoc nature in which the components must assemble for deployment. Additionally, although the training is standardized throughout the Air Force that in itself is not a guarantee of compatibility and unity of effort once a security detachment forms.

On March 17, 1997, the Air Force activated the 820th Security Forces Group (SFG) to solve the problems associated with the UTC concept. The 820th SFG is a multifunctional security unit, with seven permanently attached flights, which can rapidly deploy in support of an AEF. The primary job of the 820th SFG is to deploy in advance of the AEF and establish base security. The Air Force intends this unit to have the capability to operate outside the wire to provide security against a Level I and II threat throughout the TAOR. The unit has training and coordination advantages over the UTC type security units through its permanent organization. A drawback to the 820th SFG is

[35] AFPD 31-3, *Air Base Defense*, 1.
[36] Air Force Handbook 31-305, *Security Police Deployment Planning*, 31 October 1994, 50-51.

that it is one of a kind unit, which limits its deployment possibilities. The current employment concept for the 820th SFG is for the unit to deploy and establish a secure environment and then be replaced within 90 days by one of the UTC security units on a rotational basis.[37]

The US Air Force and Army have traditionally only performed those air base ground defense missions specifically required by joint doctrine and agreement. This problem continues today with joint doctrine based upon the linear battlefield framework left over from the cold war. The Joint Rear Area (JRA) concept and the area defense mission do not provide a sufficient level of security where distinct battle lines and easily defined areas of responsibility do not exist. In a step to solve this problem, the Air Force has instituted new policies and doctrine to make its security forces capable of operating beyond the air base perimeter. Through the expansion the security force mission, the Air Force can potentially counter the most likely threat to the air base which is a standoff attack. Whether the Unit Type Code (UTC) security unit or the 820th Security Forces Group (SFG) will be sufficient to handle this complex mission is yet to be seen. Nonetheless, the changes instituted by the Air Force are a step in the right direction in providing a credible security force for the Air Expeditionary Force (AEF).

The next chapter will look at the option exercised by the United States Air Force during the Vietnam War to provide improved security for the air bases in the Southeast Asia Theater. The conditions facing commanders then were very similar to what the AEF commander will face in future conflicts.

[37] Air Force Instruction 31-304, 820 Security Forces, 1997, 2.

Chapter 3

ABGD DOCTRINE

Doctrine should be alive—-growing, evolving, and maturing. New experiences, reinterpretations of former experiences, advances in technology, changes in threats, and cultural changes can all require alterations to parts of our doctrine even as other parts remain constant. If we allow our thinking about aerospace power to stagnate, our doctrine can become dogma.

AFM 1-1

Basic Aerospace Doctrine of the USAF

Historically, The Army and Air Force have paid little attention to the problems associated with air base ground defense. The Army does not have a doctrinal manual dedicated to ABGD and the Air Force doctrine encompasses only the tactical level. Instead of providing a comprehensive solution to the major ground threats to an air base, each service has generally only performed those missions specifically addressed in joint doctrine. The lack of specific guidance in the joint doctrine for ABGD has left air bases and associated facilities vulnerable to enemy attack.

The Joint Doctrine Encyclopedia defines base defense as “the local military measures, both normal and emergency, required to nullify or reduce the effectiveness of

enemy attacks on, or sabotage of, a base, to ensure that the maximum capacity of its facilities is available to US forces."[38] This definition fails to identify what military measures or which service they should come from. It also fails to define geographical limits of the local area controlled by the base defender. The current joint doctrine makes the combatant CINC responsible for the coordination and assignment of the base defense mission within his theater of operations.

Joint Pub 0-2, *Unified Action Armed Forces (UNAAF)*, is also unclear when assigning the functions for the military services. It states each service is responsible "to develop, garrison, supply, equip, and maintain bases and other installations, including lines of communication, and to provide administrative and logistics support for all forces and bases, unless otherwise directed by the Secretary of Defense."[39] The mission to provide defensive security by the services is implied in the term "maintain bases and other installations" and is not a specific assignment. Subsequently there is little in the way of guidance directing the provision of defensive capabilities outside a services specific mission.

A major problem with joint doctrine for base defense is that it is written for military operations in a developed theater of operations following a cold war model. The essential components of the defensive structure depend upon the presence of a competent land component, either US or Host Nation, and a linear battlefield structure. The clearly defined forward and rear areas of a linear battlefield make coordination of defensive forces much easier for the geographic CINC or Joint Force Commander (JFC). Normally all support operations such as logistics bases, marshalling areas, and air bases are located

[38] Joint Doctrine Encyclopedia, 63.
[39] Joint Publication 0-2, Unified Action Armed Forces (UNAAF), II-13.

away from the forward areas or front to provide for greater security. It is the rear area concept that defines the responsibility for defensive security missions and operations. Accordingly, the JFC "will designate a specific land area within his operational area as the Joint Rear Area (JRA) to facilitate protection and operation of installations and forces supporting the joint force."[40]

The JRA is divided into areas of operations (AOs) to facilitate mutual support between bases located within the designated AO. By forming clusters of bases, the security level increases and leads to a reduction in the number of forces required to provide base and area defense against Level I, II, and III threats. A major assumption of the JRA concept is that the base can provide its own security to defeat a Level I threat. Level I threats are classified as agents, saboteurs, sympathizers, and terrorists. A base defense force also must be able to delay Level II threats such as small tactical units, unconventional warfare forces, and guerillas until area rapid response forces can respond. The Level III threats are large tactical force operations, which include airborne, air assault, and amphibious operations and are beyond the base defense force capability. Level III threats require the use of a tactical combat force (TCF) which is normally a combat unit from the land component within the theater.[41]

The main problem of coordinating defensive efforts occurs between the Air Force base defense force and the Army's area defense force. The Air Force security forces have traditionally oriented towards a point defense of the air base and its perimeter. Normal Air Force security force operations do not extend beyond the perimeter of the air base or installation as security personnel are not trained or equipped for the mission. The

[40] Joint Pub 3-10.1, *JTTP for Base Defense*, I-1.
[41] Joint Pub 3-10.1, I-6.

Army prefers to conduct defense on an area basis and not dedicate forces to a fixed or point defense role. With the mission to conduct sustained offensive land operations, provide rapid response forces, and tactical combat forces, the Army simply does not have the personnel and equipment available to conduct dedicated point defense operations.

The USAF has two clear choices for future operations, accept doctrine as is or adapt the Air Force tactical doctrine to meet the needs of the AEF. The Air Force ABGD doctrine based on the cold war threat provides an unacceptable level of security for AEF operations for several reasons. First, the AEF although light, rapidly deployable, and highly capable still must occupy permanent air bases once in the theater of operations. The physical properties of an air base do not change just because it is supporting an AEF. The air base support structure will still consist of aircraft parking areas, maintenance and operations areas, fuel and ammunition stocks, runways, and personnel support areas. The quality of these facilities is questionable in areas other than established NATO or Middle Eastern allied countries. Most nations lack the high-quality facilities necessary to support modern US aircraft. Specifically, aircraft shelters and secure billeting for crews will be limited or nonexistent, and ramp space will tend to be crowded. Foreign military facilities are likely to lack prepared fighting positions and a well-defined defense plan. Furthermore, US security forces may have little or no experience working with host nation military forces. Operations may also take place from insecure civilian airports where jet fuel is typically stored above ground, and access control is often quite poor. Air Force high-value aircraft such as airlifters, tankers, and AWACS will often operate from these hard-to-protect sites.[42]

[42] Shlapak, 15.

Second, one of the goals of the AEF is to employ Agile Combat Support, which should make it possible to reduce the number of support functions and personnel deployed. The increased responsiveness and support rendered from the reach-back concept will allow the AEF to operate effectively with a reduced "footprint."[43] The reduced "footprint" in personnel and equipment lessens the vulnerability of the force in the sense that fewer potential targets are present at the air base.[44] However, reducing the package size does not automatically reduce the support requirement equally. Since the physical dimensions of the air base do not change based on the size of the force occupying it, the force protection mission may actually be more difficult because a smaller number of personnel must protect the same area.

Third, the security force must be able to provide an adequate defensive posture in order to allow the AEF to operate effectively. Security of facilities, the air base, and the area outside the air base is vital to the mission. Host nation capabilities may not be sufficient to provide the defense of the local area outside the air base. The Khobar Towers bombing is an example of an Air Force facility attacked by a hostile force while a supposedly capable host nation force provided external security. A bomb as powerful as the Khobar Towers truck bomb could easily cause extensive damage to a flight line, ammunition or fuel dump, or an air operations center.

Finally, the AEF base commander will face the challenge of providing the force protection necessary to defend his force. Existing doctrine, because it is based upon a developed and mature theater, does not provide the AEF base commander clear guidance for performing this vital mission. The base security force can currently provide adequate

[43] AFDD 1, *Air Force Basic Doctrine*, 35.
[44] Global Engagement, 16.

defense within the perimeter of the air base but is not capable of effectively countering threats outside the perimeter. The issue for the AEF base commander is how to counter the threat outside the wire when US ground forces or a capable host nation force is not present. The Khobar Towers incident and the experience in Somalia emphasize the point that our personnel and resources are not secure from threats. Brigadier General Coleman, Commander of the Air Force Security Forces, stated

"Combat wings with AEF taskings will require additional resources for force protection. Those wings expected to operate autonomously, must possess the capability to enforce the legal perimeter, dominate the tactical perimeter and exert influence in the area of interest. This may require more than the present levels of manpower, equipment and intelligence available today. The Air Force must provision these units to operate at a level commensurate with the needs of the air power mission."[45]

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[45] White Paper, 13.
[46] AFPD 31-3, *Air Base Defense*, 1.

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[47] Air Force Handbook 31-305, *Security Police Deployment Planning*, 31 October 1994, 50-51.

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Summary

The US Air Force and Army have traditionally only performed those air base ground defense missions specifically required by joint doctrine and agreement. This problem continues today with joint doctrine based upon the linear battlefield framework left over from the cold war. The Joint Rear Area (JRA) concept and the area defense mission do not provide a sufficient level of security where distinct battle lines and easily defined areas of responsibility do not exist. In a step to solve this problem, the Air Force has instituted new policies and doctrine to make its security forces capable of operating beyond the air base perimeter. Through the expansion the security force mission, the Air Force can potentially counter the most likely threat to the air base which is a standoff attack. Whether the Unit Type Code (UTC) security unit or the 820th Security Forces Group (SFG) will be sufficient to handle this complex mission is yet to be seen. Nonetheless, the changes instituted by the Air Force are a step in the right direction in providing a credible security force for the Air Expeditionary Force (AEF).

The next chapter will look at the option exercised by the United States Air Force during the Vietnam War to provide improved security for the air bases in the Southeast

[48] Air Force Instruction 31-304, 820 Security Forces, 1997, 2.

Asia Theater. The conditions facing commanders then were very similar to what the AEF commander will face in future conflicts.

Chapter 4

CASE STUDY: OPERATION SAFE SIDE

The enormous mass of non-combatant personnel who look after the very few heroic pilots, who alone in ordinary circumstances do all the fighting, is an inherent difficulty in the organization of the air force. Here is the chance for this great mass to add fighting quality to the necessary services they perform. Every airfield should be a stronghold of fighting air-groundmen, and not the abode of uniformed civilians in the prime of life protected by detachments of soldiers.

Prime Minister Winston S. Churchill

The Grand Alliance

The United States Air Force security force experience in Vietnam represented a dramatic change in air base ground defense operations. For the first time Air Force units operated not from protected sanctuary but from bases subject to hostile fire at all times. The Vietnam War was characterized by a lack of established fronts and secure rear areas which brought about a totally new mind-set for the defense of air bases and installations. This chapter analyzes the US effort in Vietnam and the Air Force program "SAFE SIDE" for the accomplishment of air base ground defense. The lessons learned from this program are applicable to US Air Force security operations today.

Background

Between 0025 and 0035 local time on 1 November 1964, Viet Cong (VC) troops attacked Bien Hoa Air Base, 25 kilometers Northeast of Saigon. Positioning six 81mm mortars about 400 meters north of the base, the enemy gunners fired 60-80 rounds onto parked aircraft and troop billets. The VC then withdrew undetected and unmolested.[49] The attack left four Americans dead and 72 others wounded. Losses included 5 B-57's destroyed and 15 damaged as well as 4 VNAF A-1's destroyed or damaged.[50] The VC/NVA attack on Bien Hoa Air Base, the first of some 475 such attacks on 10 key air bases in the Republic of Vietnam (RVN) during the Vietnam Conflict (1961-1973)[51], caught US and allied forces off guard.

The early US presence in RVN, beginning in 1961, was in an advisory capacity only, providing material, training, and advice to the RVN government in their struggle against the communist insurgents. However, neither the American advisors nor RVN forces considered the threat of guerrilla forces to the security of air bases to be a serious matter, and failed to provide for indigenous or organic USAF forces to defend the area outside the air bases.[52]

In Vietnam, the US Air Force at first ignored air base ground defense. Instead, it concentrated on the physical security of US facilities located on the bases.[53] During the early phase of the war, the ARVN assumed responsibility for external air base security with the RVNAF providing the perimeter security. However, with no real doctrine or

[49] Lane, 8.
[50] Berger, 35.
[51] Fox, iii.
[52] LTC Wayne Purser, Air Base Ground Defense: An Historical Perspective and Vision for the 1990's (Maxwell AFB, Ala.: Air War College, 1989), 21.
[53] BG Raymond E. Bell, USAR, "To Protect an Airbase," *Air Power Journal* Vol. 3 (Fall) 1989, 9.

concept of operations these forces were ill prepared to handle this critical mission. Because of this, it was fortunate the VC/NVA chose not to exploit RVNAF air bases in the early years. The lack of enemy insurgency and infiltration against the weak ARVN/RVNAF air base ground defense force lulled the US forces into a false sense of security.[54]

The inadequacies of RVNAF ABGD capabilities were finally realized and described by then US Ambassador to the RVN, Maxwell D. Taylor, stating "the [01 November 1964 VC] attack at Bien Hoa marked a turning point in Viet Cong tactics" and boldly "…demonstrated beyond doubt that RVNAF defense measures were inadequate, uncoordinated, [and] intrinsic to all US/RVN air base defense operations."[55] The Bien Hoa attack, in addition to other overt VC/NVA incidents, shattered US confidence in ARVN/RVNAF capabilities to defend RVN air bases. These events were in response to the bombing campaign against North Vietnam and prompted a limited deployment of ground forces (Army and Marine) to assist in the defense of RVNAF air bases and US facilities. The first US ground troops arrived on 8 March 1965 when the 9th Marine Expeditionary Brigade landed at Da Nang to secure American facilities there. On 5 May 1965, the Army's 173d Airborne Brigade arrived at Bien Hoa to defend the military complex there. By the end of May 50,000 American troops were in South Vietnam, 10,000 of them Air Force.[56] This arrangement did not work well since it tied down US offensive ground forces in a strictly defensive role. In a December 1965 letter, addressing among other things the mission of installation security, General William C.

[54] Fox, 12.
[55] Ibid. 16.
[56] Berger, 40.

Westmoreland, Commander United States Military Assistance Command Vietnam (COMUSMACV), issued these instructions to his commanders:

"I expect that our battalions will be used to go after VC and that we will not be forced to expand our capabilities simply to protect ourselves…Therefore, we must call upon all of our troops to perform not only in a defensive role around our installations, but also they must take certain additional measures which we all know to be essential in achieving real security. I have in mind the necessity for patrolling, for outposts, and for reaction forces… I desire that all service units and all forces whatever service who find themselves operating without infantry protection…. Will be organized, trained and exercised to perform the defensive and security functions which I have just discussed …I reiterate that their participation in self-defense is not an optional matter, but an urgent necessity."[57]

The ARVN and RVNAF proved ineffective and unreliable in their efforts to protect Air Force bases. The Air Force requested that the Army take over this task in accordance with JCS Pub 2.[58] At first, the U.S. Army was willing to provide forces for base defense. However, because of force level restrictions which limited its resources the Army could not provide the necessary forces for base defense and still carry out its primary offensive mission of search and destroy.[59] The Army's position was best described by Lt. Gen. Throckmorton, USA Deputy COMUSMAV, in 1964 when he stated: "Major installations have priority for defense, but only against strong VC mass attacks. There are no plans to

[57] USAF, "Combat Security Police Forces for Air Base Defense." 12 June 1969, Vol. I, K-MP-821-SU-RE, in USAF Collection, AFHRA, 6.
[58] JCS Pub 2, United Action Armed Forces assigned the mission of defending land areas within the theater of operations. The services were responsible for the internal defense of their bases and installations.
[59]USAF, "Combat Security Police Forces for Air Base Defense." 12 June 1969, Vol. I, K-MP-821-SU-RE, in USAF Collection, AFHRA, 2.

tie down U.S. troops to defend U.S. air bases against mortar and sneak attack, it costs too much in troops."[60]

The Army's position left the USAF in the difficult position of trying to protect its own air bases against standoff attacks. The security police force received no training in the US on the type of infantry tactics necessary to conduct combat patrols and defense beyond the air base perimeter. Nor was there a standard program set up to provide this training when the airmen arrived in country, and as a result, each base developed its own system of defense. Table 1, located on the next page, provides an idea of the scope of the threat facing US bases during the period of 1964 through 1968.

Nevertheless, the protection of air bases in Vietnam remained a low priority until the 1968 Tet offensive. During Tet, the enemy unleashed over 84,000 troops to attack Saigon, thirty-six provincial capitals, sixty-four district capitals, fifty hamlets, ARVN and U.S. Army units, plus air bases throughout the country.[61] Immediately after Tet, the USAF moved to enhance the ability of the Security Police to defend air bases. Improvements included changing the role of Directorate of Security Police from a staff position to an operational command, adding a Base Defense Operations Center (BDOC) to control operations, and creating a totally new force with the capability to operate outside the perimeter of the air base.

[60] Fox, 26.
[61] Ibid., 54.

Year	Number of Attacks	Aircraft Destroyed/Damaged	Value
1964	1 attack	6 aircraft destroyed 12 aircraft major damage	$17,965,000
1965	4 attacks	11 aircraft destroyed 25 aircraft major damage	$20,586,000
1966	9 attacks	5 aircraft destroyed 49 aircraft major damage	$27,635,000
1967	22 attacks	18 aircraft destroyed 65 aircraft major damage	$45,730,000
1968	122 attacks	32 aircraft destroyed 65 aircraft major damage	$38,200,000
TOTAL	158 attacks	72 aircraft destroyed 216 major damage	$150,119,000

Table 1. Summary of air base attacks 1964-1968.[62]

SAFE SIDE

The Air Force did not fully understand the seriousness of the base defense problem until after the countrywide attacks during Tet 1968.[63] When the Army's mission changed there were no US forces committed to the external defense of the bases. The VNAF base

[62] USAF, *HQ USAF Inspector General Survey*, 12 October 1970, K132.103-15, 1964-1969, in USAF Collection, AFHRA.

commander became responsible for the external air base defense and he controlled all ground forces (ARVN, regional forces, and popular forces) in the sector assigned to base defense.[64] With the realization that the VNAF would be in charge of all base defense forces the Air Force began to look at developing a larger self-defense force. The Air Force, using JCS Pub 2 and the MACV message as guidance, decided to move forward with the development of ground combat units for base defense. [65]

"The guidance from JCS Pub 2 clearly shows the Air Force is responsible for providing *local defense* for its bases. The Army is responsible for *offensive* ground action and *defense* of *land areas*. There is no roles and mission conflict for the USAF to provide forces for the local ground defense of its bases—provided these forces are limited to *local, defensive* operations—to defend the air base. In fact, JCS Pub 2 assigns this responsibility to the Air Force and To USAF base commanders."[66] (Emphasis in original).

"Contrary to the preconceived notions on the roles and missions problem in Air Base Defense, I am told that all restrictions of Air Force reaction to the base perimeters are *Air Force Self Imposed*. There is *no* MACV resistance to our going off-base in defense of our resources consistent with our capability and training."[67] (Emphasis in original).

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[63] USAF, *Southeast Asia Trip Report October 1967*, Project CORONA HARVEST, K132.103-2, 11 Dec. 1969, in USAF Collection, AFHRA, 3.
[64] USAF, *Southeast Asia Trip Report October 1967*, Project CORONA HARVEST, K132.103-2, 11 Dec. 1969, in USAF Collection, AFHRA, 30.
[65] In fact during the 28-month period before the report, US Air Force bases received 23 attacks with 111 aircraft damaged or destroyed. USAF, *Combat Security Forces for Air Base Defense*, Vol. I, Tab 1, K-MP-821-SU-RE, 12 June 1969, in USAF Collection, AFHRA, 3.
[66] USAF, *Backup Brief: "Roles and Missions"* May 1969, Project CORONA HARVEST, K132.103-11, May 1969, in USAF Collection, AFHRA.
[67] USAF, *Southeast Asia Trip Report October 1967*, Project CORONA HARVEST, K132.103-2, 11 Dec. 1969, in USAF Collection, AFHRA, 2.

In late 1965, the Air Force chose to increase air base security capabilities by increasing the number of security police personnel in Vietnam. Simply increasing the number of personnel did not enhance the security of Air Forces facilities. The Air Force's next attempt was to develop a program to train and equip security policemen highly skilled in ground combat techniques.[68] Between 1968 and 1971, the Air Force formed three combat air police "SAFE SIDE" squadrons to perform airfield defense duties in South Vietnam. The SAFE SIDE squadrons differed from regular security police units in their ability to conduct combat patrols outside the air base perimeter.[69]

Taught at the Army's Schofield Barracks in Hawaii, the SAFE SIDE program provided highly specialized combat training for Air Force Security Police. Approximately 175 members of the TAC 821st Combat Security Police Squadron arrived from Fairchild AFB, Washington, the week-end of 16-17 March 1968. This was the first unit to participate in the advanced training which covered the latest rifles, mortars, grenade launchers, and hand grenades as well as refined techniques of base perimeter defense. Plans called for 500 to 600 Air Force Combat Security Police to receive the combat training before deploying to Phan Rang, Vietnam. The 821st completed a compressed training cycle and left Hawaii on 15 April 1968 for Vietnam.[70]

The first SAFE SIDE squadron in Vietnam had serious deficiencies in training and orientation. First, due to poor planning they deployed without sufficient equipment and supplies to do the mission. Second, their training concentrated on modified Army Ranger

[68] The program began in May of 1966 but due to requirements to provide functional studies and fulfill bureaucratic red tape, the first unit was not ready to deploy until April of 1968. USAF, *Backup Brief: "Roles and Missions"* May 1969, Project CORONA HARVEST, K132.103011. May 1969, in USAF Collection, AFHRA. 4.
[69] Berger, 269.
[70] USAF, *Project SAFE SIDE I: Support by the 6468th Air Base Wing*, Project CORONA HARVEST, Vol. 2, K132.104-8, 1964-1967, in USAF Collection, AFHRA.

skills such as long range patrolling and individual survival skills instead of defensive squad and platoon tactics necessary for base defense. Finally, the Security Policemen who were already there and successful at defending the base perimeter resented the SAFE SIDE personnel who apparently had been led to think they were better than the others which caused morale problems. The succeeding SAFE SIDE squadrons overcame the initial squadron's problems of improper tactics and cooperation with existing units because of better training and indoctrination.[71]

The SAFE SIDE program would eventually field squadrons to provide protection for each of the 10 major bases in Vietnam.[72] The Air Force considered activating as many as 30 squadrons so that each deployable enhanced wing would have its own organic self-defense capability but the cost in personnel and equipment exceeded the resources available.[73] The basic SAFE SIDE squadron provided effective command/control and achieved an optimum balance between surveillance, firepower, and air mobility. The basic unit organization for base defense was a 559-man combat security police squadron composed of three field flights (167 men each), a tactical headquarters and a headquarters

[71] The combat security personnel of the SAFE SIDE squadron received training, which emphasized individual infantry skills instead of squad and platoon tactics. Their training focus did not emphasize integration with the existing security forces and in place defensive measures. The SAFE SIDE personnel deployed with the understanding that the in-place forces were not capable at base defense. Col. Donald C. Shultis, Director of Security Police, (TIG), HQ, USAF 30 Sep 1969, Project CORONA HARVEST, K132.103-14, 30 Sept 1969, in USAF Collection, AFHRA, 3.

[72] Almost all USAF resources in South Vietnam were located on 10 major air bases. Six of them--Da Nang, Pleiku, Nha Trang, Bien Hoa, Tan Son Nhut, and Binh Thuy--were joint use installations with the Air Force a tenant of the VNAF. The other four--Phu Cat, Tuy Hoa, Cam Rahn Bay, and Phan Rang--were constructed between 1965 and 1967 for use by the US Air Force alone. The older bases were situated in urban areas where the dense population provided ideal cover for enemy operations and prohibited or severely restricted defensive fire. The new bases, though less congested, were sited without much regard for defense considerations. Phu Cat, for example, overlapped three districts, thereby necessitating triple coordination of security operations with local officials. Berger, 259.

[73] USAF, *Combat Security Forces for Air Base Defense*, Vol. I, Tab 1, K-MP-821-SU-RE, 12 June 1969, in USAF Collection, AFHRA, 13.

flight. This organization provided modular packages in the form of sections, flights or squadrons, each with its own tactical headquarters element.[74]

The SAFE SIDE squadron was most effective as a mobile, in-country base defense contingency force that could deploy quickly to any facility where the threat was particularly high.[75] Additionally, SAFE SIDE units established a ground defense intelligence capability at each air base. The SAFE SIDE units produced an enemy order of battle map showing the location and strength of the enemy by gathering pertinent information from all the ground intelligence collection and intelligence producing units in the local area, including OSI.[76] The SAFE SIDE program proved to be extremely effective at countering the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army forces in an around US air bases. In June 1969, Colonel Milton Pollen, 7th Air Force Director of Security Police, in his end of tour report credited the SAFESIDE squadrons with making "a significant contribution to the air base defense mission" and recommended the continuation and expansion of the program.[77] Several lessons from this experience are applicable to the defense of the AEF air base. The next section will analyze the relevant lessons learned from the SAFE SIDE program for air base ground defense.

Lessons Learned

The first and probably most important lesson learned by the Air Force security forces, during the Vietnam War, was even though US and friendly ground forces are providing area or sub-area defense, the bases within the protected area are not immune to

[74] Ibid., 7
[75] Berger, 269.
[76] Shultis, 6.
[77] Milton T. Pollen, Col. USAF, *End of Tour Report: Director of Security Police Seventh Air Force 7 June 68 - 7 June 69*, Project CHECO, M-U42193-304, in USAF Collection, AFHRA. 15.

enemy attacks. The most significant attacks were those against Tan Son Nhut and Bien Hoa air bases during the 1968 Tet offensive.[78] The NVA/VC considered these two air bases essential to seizing the RVN capital because of their close proximity to Saigon.[79] However, there were many other attacks against air bases, although not on such a large scale. The Vietnam experience demonstrates the need for air bases to have forces organic to the base for protection from local ground attack. The office of AF/XODD in a 1973 brief to General John D. Ryan, Chief of Staff of the Air Force, stated "the basic concept of utilizing in-house resources to respond to enemy threats beyond the perimeter represents the most practical course of action for near-term enhancement of our oversea air base/installation defense posture." [80] The Air Force maintained large Law Enforcement flights on joint use air bases, some as large as 200 men, even though their own reports indicated a low utilization rate for these forces.[81] Law Enforcement personnel could have contributed more by assuming a greater role in the base defense mission.

Second, the doctrine of the time, while effective for interior perimeter security and a cold war scenario, lacked appropriate guidance for the conduct of defensive operations outside the wire. Joint doctrine did not define the procedures for the linkup of air base point defense forces and the Army's area defense forces. Since the doctrine lacked specific guidance for defensive coordination measures and command and control, the use of patrols beyond the perimeter remained an ad hoc affair.

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[78] USAF, *Backup Brief: "Roles and Missions"* May 1965, Project CORONA HARVEST, K132.103-11, May 1969, in USAF Collection, AFHRA, 3.
[79] Fox, 51.
[80] LTC Fisher, AF/XODD, *Overseas Air Base/Installation Defense*, 8 May 1973, Papers of Ryan, J. D., GEN., 168.7085-171, in USAF Collection, AFHRA.
[81] USAF, *Southeast Asia Trip Report October 1967*, Project CORONA HARVEST, K132.103-2, 11 Dec. 1969, in USAF Collection, AFHRA, 11.

Active defense measures, employed by the Army and SAFE SIDE units, proved to be the most effective way to counter the enemy activity around the air bases. Active defense measures are actions taken to prevent enemy attacks entirely or to inflict heavy damage on the attacking force to discourage future attacks. The idea behind the active defense was to detect the enemy before he moves into effective mortar range. Patrols and ambushes operating out to effective mortar range were necessary and operated on likely avenues of approach and near potential weapons sites.[82]

While active defense was the most effective technique against the enemy, the security forces at times lost focus of their mission. The SAFE SIDE squadron mission was to provide base defense and not to conduct a search and destroy program. The personnel assigned to the SAFE SIDE units in an attempt to prove themselves at times became more concerned with offensive operations than with the primary mission of base defense.[83]

Third, with the limitation on the number of personnel who could deploy into Vietnam, augmentees played an important role in the overall defense of the air base. Following MACV guidance support personnel received training and assisted in base defense, consistent with their primary mission.[84] The number of augmentees varied from base to base but the overall opinion was that they could effectively enhance the defensive effort. Assigned to bunkers or defensive positions the augmentees would receive training from the security police to act as assistant gunners, ammunition handlers, and non-combat duties. Other augmentees assisted by acting as vehicle drivers for the security

[82] MACV Command-wide Base Defense Seminar, 1967. Report [n.p.] 3 July 1967 (M-C 41729-245), 18.
[83] USAF, *Southeast Asia Trip Report October 1967*, Project CORONA HARVEST, K132.103-2, 11 Dec. 1969, in USAF Collection, AFHRA, 3.
[84] MACV Command-wide Base Defense Seminar, 3.

police, message runners on daylight posts as a backup to the communications system, and as a means of providing additional reserve forces during daylight hours.[85]

Fourth, fixed-wing aircraft and helicopters were invaluable to the defense of air bases. The major problem was a lack of sufficient aircraft to provide direct support to each base. Normally one aircraft, an AC-47, would cover three bases. The AC-47 response time was as high as thirty minutes depending on the position of the aircraft in its orbit which was too slow to deal with off-base attacks. The UH-1 helicopter proved to be effective in providing aerial surveillance of the area out to the effective range of enemy mortars. The main problem with helicopter support was the lack of station time in comparison to the AC-47.[86] Personnel at Phu Cat Air Base used a combination of aircraft to counter enemy activity with a ROK FAC patrolling every morning and evening, and Army UH-1F helicopters searching the area for potential threats to the base.

The security police generally preferred close air support to field artillery support to suppress enemy attacks. The believed artillery was not as effective as air strikes because the artillery units did not have forward observer while the majority of the air strikes around the base used forward air controllers (FACs). Additionally, the reaction time of the supporting artillery was around 20 minutes, which was too slow to engage the enemy.[87]

Finally, most US Air Force units were co-located with VNAF units on VNAF air bases. Therefore, US Air Force field commanders did not have the authority to control or defend the air bases they occupied. Local civilians had near total access to air bases and

[85] USAF, *Southeast Asia Trip Report October 1967*, Project CORONA HARVEST, K132.103-2, 11 Dec. 1969, in USAF Collection, AFHRA, 12.
[86]Ibid., 7.
[87]Ibid., 9.

constructed buildings and shacks at or close to the perimeter making base defense more difficult. It was politically impossible for US commanders to demand the VNAF remove the civilians from the area. MACV recommended that in the future US forces occupy single-use bases to provide the base commander with control over base access and security. The common requirement for the base commander to coordinate with the province chief and receive approval before counter-mortar fire made the threat reaction untimely. The commander's ability of rapid retaliation against an enemy attack can inflict heavy casualties on the attacking force making them more cautious about attacking in the future. There must be firm agreements made between all forces, which participate, in the base defense to insure that there is a minimum of time lag between target identification and counter-fire.[88]

This list is obviously not all the lessons learned from the Vietnam experience but it does highlight some of the major problems that the AEF commander will likely encounter during future operations.

Chapter 5 will compare and assess the effectiveness of the USAF ABGD initiatives against other available military options for the protection of expeditionary air bases.

[88] MACV Command-wide Base Defense Seminar, 19.

Chapter 5

SOLUTIONS TO THE AEF ABGD PROBLEM

Every man in an Air Force uniform ought to be armed with something—a rifle, a tommy-gun, a pistol, a pike, or a mace;…Every airman should have his place in the defence scheme.…It must be understood by all ranks that they are expected to fight and die in the defence of their airfields.

Prime Minister Winston S. Churchill

The Grand Alliance

Solving the air base ground defense problem is not just a US Air Force mission. By doctrine, the geographic CINC is responsible for the force protection of US military personnel and resources deployed in his area of responsibility. The geographic CINC must allocate forces for the defense of installations and critical facilities within the area of operations and depending on the situation may assign the mission to a joint or single service component. Several possible courses of action exist to solve the AEF ABGD problem and range from relying totally upon the host nation and doing nothing, to deploying a large Army force to occupy the area of operations. The selected course of action will have to solve the base defense problem in terms of the real and perceived threat, credibility and capability of host nation support, and the size of the area requiring defense. This chapter provides an analysis of several possible solutions to the air base

ground defense problem. The options considered in this chapter are standard Air Force security force units, the 820th Security Forces Group (SGF) program, US Army military police, and the US Army's rapid deployment forces.

Assessment Criteria

The criteria for assessing the strengths and weaknesses of air base ground defense options come from the AEF mission statement; lessons learned from operations such as SAFE SIDE, and joint and service doctrine.

First, what is the ability of the security force to control the tactical area of responsibility (TAOR)? Historically, standoff attacks and terrorist activities are the most likely threats to our air bases and facilities. Any force performing the air base ground defense mission must be capable of defeating Level I and II threats and disrupting or delaying Level III threats within the TAOR.

Second, how deployable is the security force? The security force must have the training, equipment, and capability to deploy rapidly anywhere the AEF is to operate. The force must arrive before or with the AEF units to establish immediate defensive security of the air base and its facilities. The rapid deployment requirement eliminates the possibility for a large and heavily armed force and instead encourages the formation of a force that is relatively small and lightly equipped.

Third, Does the security force have the personnel and training to operate with Host Nation forces? The ability to integrate operations with the Host Nation forces will enhance the security of the deployed force. The Host Nation will determine the number of personnel allowed to deploy and the extent to which the security forces can operate outside the air base perimeter. Additionally, the Host Nation may influence the ability of

the air base or security force commander to develop adequate command and control measures by limiting the authority to question, detain, and arrest local civilians considered a threat to US facilities.

Finally, Does the security force have training in ground intelligence collection and analysis, civil military operations, and command and control functions? One of the most valuable capabilities of the SAFE SIDE squadrons during the Vietnam War was the ability to develop an enemy ground order of battle. Through analysis of enemy movements, they were able to anticipate enemy activities and prevent many airfield attacks. Additionally, the capability to provide command and control of close air support and surveillance aircraft is invaluable to the air base defense mission as they provide additional security through a visible deterrent over the tactical area of responsibility.

US Air Force Security Forces

Standard Air Force Security Units are unacceptable for the initial deployment of an AEF. First, the UTC type units are generally are not trained or equipped for rapid deployment. The main problem is the requirement to assemble the different UTCs into a coherent operating unit. With the AEF deploying within 48 hours of notification there is not enough time to alert, marshal, and deploy the security units when not permanently formed for deployment. Second, once assembled they must go through a period of training to become proficient at large unit operations and tactics essential to the defense of the air base and TAOR. Finally, these units generally do not have the organic ground intelligence and analysis capability, civil military affairs personnel, or the early entry ground combat training required to establish initial defensive perimeters. These units are best suited to act as rotational replacements for a unit such as the 820th SFG as they are

quite capable of conducting an effective defense once assembled, trained, and readied for deployment.[89]

820th Security Forces Group (SFG)

The 820th SFG is modeled after the British RAF Regiment and the SAFE SIDE program. The 820th SFG is a multi-functional unit trained, organized, and equipped to provide deployed force protection ranging in scope from military operations other than war to major regional conflicts. Designed for rapid movement, this unit, coupled with its security forces flights and heavy weapons elements, is capable of deploying within 24 hours of notification. The primary focus of the 820th SFG is to provide force protection for the AEF.[90]

The 820th SFG option provides an answer to the AEF defense problem when the host nation forces are capable of providing Level III threat defense within the area of operations. The 820th SFG provides the Air Force base commander with several advantages over the regular security force squadrons belonging to the combat wings. First, as a unit organized, trained, and equipped to conduct defensive combat operations, the 820th SFG can secure the tactical area of responsibility (TAOR), for the base commander, out to the range of the most common standoff weapons. The 820th SFG is capable with organic weapons systems to defeat Level I and II threats throughout the TAOR. Second, the 820th SFG with personnel strength of 437 is small enough to be rapidly deployable with the use of just a few strategic airlift aircraft.[91] The small size fits

[89] White Paper, 10.
[90] MG Lansford Trapp, 1998 Air Force Congressional Issue Paper (Washington, D.C.: United States Air Force, 1998), 12.
[91] Bryant Jordan, "On Guard! How the Air Force is Making Force Protection a Way of Life." *Air Force Times*, January 26, 1998. 1.

in with the AEF idea of maintaining a small footprint in the host nation country. Third, the 820th reports directly to the base or installation commander and develops the base defense plans for the base. The base commander has unity of command with this arrangement and can coordinate security operations with the other missions of the base. Finally, the 820th SFG has specialized intelligence personnel assigned who are able to collect, analyze, and disseminate enemy ground threat information. The assignment of Air Force Office of Security Investigations (AFOSI) personnel gives the security forces group the ability to conduct counter-terrorism operations.

However, there are a few limitations and shortcomings associated with the 820th SFG worth considering. First, the 820th SFG consists of squadrons currently spread over seven US bases. This dispersion of the group limits the ability to train and work together before deployment.[92] Effective command and control of ground combat operations develops only through practice and detailed rehearsals of mission tactics. Second, If the host nation force is not credible and cannot provide area security the small size of the 820th could easily be overwhelmed before reinforcements arrive in theater. The small size of the group also necessitates the use of augmentation forces from the AEF. The AEF structure is too lean to provide non-mission essential personnel to act as augmentees except under emergency conditions. The only other combat-trained personnel are the engineers of the PRIME RIB and PRIME BEEF units who have their own mission to accomplish. Third, the current employment plan calls for the 820th to remain in place for 90 days or less and then turn the mission over to regular security force units.[93] This employment plan is unacceptable as regular security force units do not train, equip, or

[92] Ibid., 2.
[93] AFI 31-304, *Air Base defense 820th Security Forces*, 1997.

organize, to level of the 820th SFG, to conduct security missions outside the perimeter to secure the TAOR.

Army Forces

The Army, by joint doctrine, is responsible for the defense of land areas assigned by the geographic CINC or JFC.[94] This assignment of responsibility assumes a developed theater where established battlefield lines and rear areas exist. When entering a theater without clearly defined areas of responsibility, the first action is to rely upon the Host Nation to provide area security. The Army normally will dedicate forces for the security and protection of facilities and units that support joint or multinational commanders conducting close and deep operations. Additionally, Army commanders may provide security for air bases located within their AO.[95] The Army normally assigns Military police (MP) units to operate in the rear area to provide area security and circulation control of units moving through the theater.

Several problems surface when considering the use of MP units for dedicated air base ground defense. First, there are generally not enough MP units in theater to use them in a dedicated point defense role for any one facility or base. Doctrinally MP units will perform as the Rapid Response Force on an area basis within the theater or area of operations. MPs train and are equipped to perform this combat function and are capable of defeating Level II threats. Second, except for MP companies assigned at the division and corps level the majority of the military police force is in the Reserves and National Guard. The ability to rapidly mobilize and deploy to a theater of operations is nearly

[94] JP 3-10.1, viii.
[95] FM 100-7, *Decisive Force: The Army in Theater Operations*, 7-10.

non-existent. The average time to mobilize, train-up, and deploy is more than 90 days, which is too long a time to support an AEF effectively. Finally, once called up for duty the force can only remain on active duty for 270 days without congressional approval or declaration of war. This limitation prevents having a trained and ready MP force to react to the needs of the Air Force AEF deployment.

The Army option proposed in this paper is the use of the XVIII Airborne Corps Rapid Deployment Forces. While not doctrinally assigned the specific mission of area or point security, the forces held on ready alert are more than capable of performing the security mission. Each division within the XVIII Airborne Corps maintains a brigade sized combat task force ready to deploy within 24 hours of notification. The task forces range from light to heavy force options depending on the division. The 10th Mountain Division (Light) is the lightest and best suited for urban or congested terrain. The 82d Airborne Division trains for forced entry operations onto airfields and urban environments. The 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) with its organic air assets is capable of ranging throughout a theater of operations to counter light and heavy forces. The 3rd Infantry Division (Mechanized) is the heavy force element capable of sustained land combat against heavy mechanized and armor forces.[96] All the brigade task forces are fully self-contained combat units which include their own artillery, air defense artillery, attack and assault helicopters, intelligence, and combat service support assets.

The brigade task force option provides a viable answer to the AEF defense problem especially where the host nation forces are neither credible nor capable. With this self-contained force package, the Army commander has several immediate advantages in conducting the security mission. First, the task force is composed of forces that train

together year round under the same task organization and commander. The commander's ability to synchronize efforts through unity of command make operations simpler and more effective. Second, intelligence assets assigned to the task force specialize in the analysis of enemy ground order of battle and capability. The brigade intelligence sections have the ability to collect, analyze, and disseminate relevant intelligence to the combat force. Third, organic air assets in the form of attack, reconnaissance, assault, electronic warfare, and Medevac helicopters give the commander a great number of options. Using the organic reconnaissance and electronic warfare aircraft, he can conduct surveillance and locate enemy forces before they can pose a threat to the air base. Once the enemy is located, attack helicopters engage with direct fires and the assault helicopters fly in rapid reaction forces to capture any remaining enemy. Fourth, the artillery units assigned to the task force can fire effective counter-battery fires. The task force fire support officer (FSO) has control over organic artillery and counter-fire radar systems to react to any enemy system within range. Finally, any of the brigade task forces can defeat Level I through Level III threats without additional augmentation as they form their own rapid reaction force and tactical combat force (TFC).

Despite the great capabilities of the brigade task force option, several limitations to supporting the AEF exist. First, the rapid deployment capability of these forces hinge on the ability of the Air Force and Air Mobility Command (AMC) to pickup and move them. If strategic airlift is not available to move the force then it cannot be in place to offer security to the AEF. Second, the size of the brigade task force may be excessive depending on the threat situation. A complete brigade task force consists of anywhere between 2500 and 3500 soldiers and their equipment. The heavier the task force the

[96] AU-8, *The Army Into the Twenty-First Century* (Maxwell AFB, Ala.: Air University Press, 1996), 48-56.

more soldiers and more heavy equipment to deploy. The brigade task force is modular and it is possible to split the main force into battalion sized task forces. The battalion task force normally consists of 700 to 1200 soldiers and has the same basic capability as the brigade task force but is not as robust. Third, no current agreements exist between the Army and Air Force to provide these forces for the dedicated protection of air bases. The Army force commander will in most cases desire to search out the enemy through offensive operations rather than taking a passive defensive posture.

The brigade or battalion task force concept provides a trained and proven force that has the requisite firepower, deployability, intelligence, and unity of command to provide a credible defense of the area of operations and the air base.[97]

Summary

US forward-deployed military forces and facilities will always have a degree of vulnerability to terrorist and hostile enemy attacks. Effective force protection can, however, reduce the threat through deterrence and decrease the chance of hostile enemy actions. The best option is to have a permanent and viable security force available that is organized, trained, and equipped to provide a credible defense against standoff and terrorist attacks. The most effective way to accomplish this defense is to establish an area of operations (AO) around our major bases. The AO would extend to the effective range

[97] The resource for this section is mainly from the author's experience of over 9 years service in the XVIII Airborne Corps within the 82d and 101st Airborne Division as an operator, planner, and commander. The author participated in over 50 deployment exercises to include deployment to Honduras, Haiti, the Joint Readiness Training Center (Ft. Polk, LA.), the National Training Center (Ft. Irwin, CA..) and several humanitarian missions throughout the United States.

of enemy standoff weapons and have one commander responsible for the defense of the base and surrounding AO.[98]

Khobar Towers is just one of many possible scenarios facing the security forces charged with defending US bases and facilities. The ability to conduct offensive or active defense operations in the host nation country is one of the key determinates in what is the proper force to defend the AEF. The geographic CINC or joint force commander will need to request clarification as to the level of US military operations allowed within an area of operations. Clear rules of engagement and diplomatic agreements will aid the commander in selecting a defensive force.

Where the host nation presents a credible and capable security force the 820th SFG provides an ideal force to establish the security of the air base and create a stable environment for air operations. It is small, rapidly deployable, and responsive to the AEF base defense needs.

Where the host nation force is neither credible nor capable, such as the experience in Vietnam or Somalia, the use of an Army brigade task force is the better choice for defense. With the capability to do forced entry operations and pacify the area rapidly, the Army force can protect the air base from nearly all ground-based threats.

The Air Force plans to employ the AEF only in areas where they have previously operated and have host nation agreements to provide basic support. The current air base ground defense structure within the Air Force is acceptable as long the host nation government remains in control of the country and the military forces. However, humanitarian operations seldom operate in countries where the government is in control and even the supposedly stable and "in-control" government of Saudi Arabia could not

[98] MACV Command-wide Base Defense Seminar (U), 19.

protect the US military forces from hostile attacks. The Air Force should continue the development of the 820th SFG for this reason alone.

Chapter 6

CONCLUSION

No deployment of American service members is risk free, and we must remain clear in our purpose and resolute in its execution. And while we must continue to reassess the costs and benefits of any operation as it unfolds, reflexive calls for withdrawal of our forces when casualties are incurred would simply encourage rouge actors to try to force our departure from areas where there are U.S. interests by attacking American troops.

President William J. Clinton

National Security Strategy

The United States Air Force is turning more and more into a CONUS based expeditionary force. The real decline in force structure and overseas bases forced the Air Force to look to new force projection options to meet the mission of Global Engagement. Using Air Expeditionary Forces (AEF) the Air Force has reduced the need to maintain forces forward deployed on a permanent basis. The AEF concept reduces PERSTEMPO and leads to a greater flexibility in force projection options.[99]

This thesis addressed the problem of protecting an AEF while deployed to the areas of reduced US presence. The history of air base ground defense forces is one of sporadic or episodic build-ups and drawdowns. During the early years of air power, the airfields

[99] Stacy Evers. "Interview with Air Combat Command C-in-C Gen. Richard Hawley." *Jane's Defense Weekly*, April 16, 1997. 32.

and bases enjoyed relative safety from ground attack as they remained far back from the well-defined front lines. Following World War I, the air base ground defense forces remained small and limited their operations to base interior security only. World War II and Korea saw the rapid build up of forces for air base ground defense only to see them eliminated as soon as the war ended. With the United States entry into the Vietnam War, the air base defense planner dealt with a new type of warfare. Vietnam was a war without clearly defined front lines and no area was secure from enemy attack. The Air Force for the first time would have to operate from bases that routinely came under ground attack by mortars, artillery, and rockets.[100] The lessons of Vietnam quickly gave way to thinking that the situation in Vietnam was a one-time occurrence and that in future wars the Army or host nation would provide external security.

The Khobar Towers bombing made the US Air Force realize that host nation forces or even US Army troops may not be sufficient to counter the threats. The unpredictable nature of the current threat with terrorist operations, asymmetric attacks by rebel forces, and civil uprisings does not leave time to organize a defensive force after the fact. US forces will remain vulnerable even when protected by host nation or our own security forces. Therefore, everyone must take responsibility to increase the security posture of their air base and facility.[101] This requires a change in US Air Force thinking where the mission of force protection is a security force problem to becoming everyone's mission.

The experience of Korea, Vietnam, and the Khobar Towers bombing clearly point out the need for the Air Force to have the capability to provide for the defense of its bases. This capability cannot be limited to the interior perimeter of the air base to

[100] Berger, 257.
[101] USAF, *Air Force Review of Gen. (Ret.) Downing Report*, 3.

effectively counter the Level I and II threats called for in joint and service doctrine. A capability must exist to venture out to the edge of the tactical area of responsibility (TAOR) and prevent attacks by disrupting the enemy effort before affecting base operations.

The US Air Force SAFE SIDE program during the Vietnam War met with a great deal of success. After overcoming initial concerns about roles and missions, the program as implemented improved the security of the US Air Force bases. The ability to conduct limited ground combat operations in absence of host nation or US Army ground forces to protect the TAOR was valuable.[102] The Air Force's ability to provide a credible ground based self-defense, at least in Vietnam, enhanced the US Army's efforts to pursue offensive operations against the enemy.

The Air Force must now decide on how it will provide a credible and capable defense of its AEF forces and air bases. The following section provides a few recommendations for the improvement of air base ground defense operations.

Recommendations:

The United States Air Force should continue the development the 820th Security Forces Group (SFG) concept. As structured the group provides the necessary immediate defensive capability to secure the air base and facilities. The 820th with it organic intelligence cell, command and control structure, and weapons systems can provide sufficient base defenses to prevent threats up to Level II from interfering with base

[102] Berger, 269.

operations. The 820th is also rapid deployable so it can meet the required deployment timeline to support the AEF.[103]

Since the AEF depends upon its small footprint to minimize its vulnerability to enemy threats, personnel assigned to the AEF must receive increased weapons training. The ability of individual airmen to provide self-defense of themselves and their work area will enhance the security forces ability to prevent enemy attacks. Training of support personnel should also include those skills needed to augment interior guard post and checkpoints. Force protection starts with the individual and not with the security force group.

Joint and Air Force doctrine must change to reflect the use of AEFs in future operations. Basing doctrine only on a developed theater of operations fails to provide the AEF commander guidance how to conduct defensive operations without US or host nation ground forces providing area security. Situations, such as humanitarian operations, will occur where the only military forces in the operation are Air Force and they need a defensive ground force.

The Air Force does not have to rely on its own forces to meet the rapid deployment timeline. The US Army rapid deployment forces can offer a great deal of assistance to the protection of AEF air bases. Since the geographic CINC is responsible for the force protection of the forces deployed in his area of responsibility, he can call upon the Army to provide forces to the operation.[104] Depending on the level of threat in the region and the capability of the host nation forces delaying the AEF deployment until Army forces are in place only seems reasonable.

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[103] AFI 31-304.
[104] JP 3-10, *Joint Doctrine for Rear Area Operations*, I-1.

Implications:

The United States Air Force must take a serious look at what it wants the AEF to accomplish. The employment plans call for the AEF to operate from pre-stocked and prepared air bases in areas where the Air Force has operated before. The host nation country must provide a significant amount of support in the way of fuel, maintenance facilities, airfield space, and security for the AEF rapid deployment[105]. These great limitations restrict the employment of the AEF to a narrow range of options.

If the above conditions are acceptable to the Air Force and the geographic CINCs then the Air Force program for air base ground defense is acceptable. The 820th SFG working with existing security force units can provide the perimeter security and TAOR defense necessary for effective AEF operations. If the above conditions are not acceptable to the geographic CINC and he desires a non-permissive entry capability or ability to operate in a less stable environment then the 820th SFG is necessary but insufficient. In the latter case the US Army's rapid deployment forces can stabilize the area of operations and allow for uninterrupted air operations.

[105] Thomas A. Kearney and Eliot A. Cohen. *Revolution in Warfare?: Air Power in the Persian Gulf War* (Annapolis, MD.: Naval Institute Press, 1995), 145-148.

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